

# News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Environmental / Cultural News

### **Crystal Cove Underwater Park Yields Important Cultural Artifact**

CRYSTAL COVE - Divers working on a kelp restoration project near Reef Point recently discovered a significant cultural artifact submerged in the underwater park at Crystal Cove State Park, California State Park officials announced today.

An odd shaped rock lying on the ocean bottom caught the keen eye of Frank Farmer, a volunteer diver with Orange County Coastkeeper, who has logged more than forty years of SCUBA diving experience including archaeological expeditions throughout the world. Farmer quickly understood the significance of the object and collected it for further evaluation and protection by state park officials.

The rock turned out to be a stone hand tool called a pestle, which was used thousands of years ago by native inhabitants of California to grind acorns and seeds. While commonly found in land archaeological sites, the pestle represents one of the first known artifacts to be found offshore in the state park area. "It is exciting to play a role in further understanding native cultures," Farmer said.

"We are beginning to develop an understanding of the ancient history of California's coastal peoples," said senior state park archaeologist John Foster. "The recovery of this beautiful pestle is an important discovery because it tells us that the underwater park can contribute important information in reconstructing the lives and cultures of this favored landscape."

State park officials anticipate future discoveries since native peoples occupied Crystal Cove for thousands of years. All submerged artifacts, including cultural and historical objects, are protected by state and, in some cases, federal laws that preserve and protect our heritage for future generations.

Park visitors, both on land and undersea, are required to leave artifacts in their natural setting, take detailed location notes, drawings, and photographs, then report all findings to park

staff. In general, regulations prohibit digging, pot hunting, and leaving designated trails in local, state, and federal parks.

Crystal Cove Underwater Park includes 1,100 off-shore acres from the mean high tide line to a depth of 120' running along the shoreline from Abalone Point in north Laguna Beach to Cameo Shores in Corona Del Mar. "State underwater parks are designated because of their significant submerged resources including natural, historical, and cultural features," said Superintendent Ken Kramer.

Crystal Cove's underwater park is one of seventeen underwater units of the California State Park System that include coastal and inland waters such as Point Lobos State Reserve in Monterey and Lake Tahoe's Emerald Bay.

"California State Park philosophy is that stewardship of public parklands does not stop at the water's edge," Kramer added. "This recent discovery confirms our long-held belief that in addition to a wealth of known natural features such as reef structures, habitats, and a variety of marine life, the underwater park also contains important cultural artifact evidence that tell the story of early human inhabitation of the coastal area of Orange County."

State Park officials hope to display the pestle, along with other natural, historical, and cultural artifacts in a new visitor center at the Crystal Cove State Park Historic District that is currently under restoration and scheduled to open by the summer of 2005.



